

Someone stole my bike last week; may his sleeves always get wet when doing dishes.

A racing bike, red and light and smooth. I've owned it for eight years. It was my main means of transportation, but it was also my comrade in bad times, my lucky charm, my silent and wise translator of goals into achieving them via legwork.

I was the fastest, I rode through every weather - you here can relate. I cleaned it every Sunday like a real German would do with his BMW.

I once rode from Hamburg to Berlin 280 km to attend a reading in the evening. I thought it was a great idea, it might have been, but strong wings caught and held us up from arriving on as planned, so I basically rode with my bicycle straight into the bookstore, had no time to shower, change, catch a breath. The audience seemed curious about this performance. But we had made it, bicycle got to sit in the first row and listen, just next to an old lady, who didn't seem too happy about her neighbour, but she understood, or at least she acted as she had understood, like probably everyone would if there was a sweaty guy in tight bicycle shorts saying "*bicycle wants to listen to me read my novel*".

Someone stole my bike last week, may there always be a small stone in his shoe.

I received many prizes throughout my career. Sometimes I say to myself, you should not accept any more, it's enough, but then I see the prize money, and I stop thinking.

One prize I remember particularly well; it is called Rheingau Literature Prize, and since Rheingau is one of Germany's finest wine regions, the prize consists not only of money, but also of 111 bottles of Rheingau Riesling Wine. I actually got 127 because one winemaker was angry to not be included in the list so he personally sent me some of his wine. So one day, a truck delivered 127 bottles of Rheingau Riesling to my home, I will never forget that day.

It was by far my favourite prize, so much wine!, even though today I kind of believe, they actually might reward a writer with that prize, because they want him to stop writing.

I say "was" my favourite – until today. And I don't mean this because I want to flatter anyone. Maybe a little. I love reading literature from all over the world, I love seeing foreign films, I love understanding how stuff works. And I appreciate tremendously the task of translating and the work of translators which allows me to embrace experiences, words, stories of others into my own.

So, I love that there is a prize like the one here, of which now Annemarie and me have become protagonists. A prize that highlights not only the quality of a single work of literature but also the importance of literary translation-work.

Also, I will buy a new bicycle from the prize money.

Someone stole my bicycle last week, I hope there is always a mosquito in his room at night.

There is a sentence in "Herkomst", it reads: "I own an expensive racing bike that I practically never ride because I'm afraid someone will steal it." - Well...

Thank you, dear Dutch Foundation for Literature, thank you Lira Foundation and the De Lancey Foundation for getting me a new bike. I promise to ride it even less so that it doesn't get stolen again.

When I say, that the European Literature Prize is my favourite, I mean it also because of the fact that the bookstores and booksellers are involved into the process of finding the winner; so, you too I thank wholeheartedly, for choosing "Herkomst", a book on how we can improve life of others by the simple task of helping them in times of personal crisis - like helping me buy a new bicycle.

Also I want to thank the jury. I know from my own jury work how weird & hard jury meetings can become, mostly ending in a fist fight and calling someone a bicycle thief, so I truly appreciate you reading my book graciously and benevolently.

Someone stole my bicycle last week. I hope there is always something stuck in his sink and he can't find out what it is.

Finally: Thank you, Annemarie, for bringing my language and my stories to life here in the Netherlands. Danke, für deine Sprache und das Nachdenken über meine, danke für deine Zeit, dein In-meinem-Kopf-sein, thank you for climbing into my head and thinking about what is in there, dein Nachdenken über meinen Stoff und meine Erfindungen und Empfindungen. I

really hope, our roads will meet again and again on the bridge  
between our languages.

Saša Stanišić

6 November 2021